



Ancestor Figure

Date

mid 20th Century

Primary Maker

latmul

Medium

Wood, clay, fiber, cowrie shell and pigment

Description

This is a standing wood funerary sculpture of a man probably created by the latmul people of the Middle Sepik River region of Papua New Guinea in the twentieth century. These funerary figures were created by members of the deceased's clan and then decorated with objects depicting feats they accomplished. They serve the dual role of honoring the recently deceased and as individuals and as embodiments of their great ancestors. The concepts of mortality and immortality are prevalently featured in latmul art and other Sepik cultures. Funerary

tradition along the Sepik is rich, and is heavily represented by multi-medium objects created by the latmul. The latmul carving style emphasizes the use of the human face over the elaboration of other body parts. Much of latmul art incorporates the human faces; such as standing figures, masks, and overmolded human skulls. Human figures are often associated with animal carving, and decorated with shell, feathers, fur, and paint. The dominant medium is carved wood, although human skulls restored in clay and the use of paint is common.

Dimensions

36 × 7 × 4 1/2 in. (91.4 × 17.8 × 11.4 cm)